

## About Virginia's Wildlife Regulations

In order to manage wildlife populations effectively, not only must adjustments be made which respond to changed biological and environmental conditions, but the timeliness of the adjustments is very important as well. For this reason, the General Assembly exempts wildlife regulations from many of the requirements that apply to most other Virginia regulations.

Many regulations require a year and a half, or more, of administrative steps before a change can be made and put into effect. Amendments to wildlife regulations, and the adjustments which they set in motion, can be made within a few months -- a capability which greatly benefits the management of highly dynamic wildlife populations.

Extensive citizen participation is vital to the making of regulations which best serve the Virginia public, the wildlife resource, and which fulfill DGIF's wildlife management mission. The comparatively rapid pace of the wildlife regulation amendment process makes citizen participation, if anything, more essential than ever.

### ***Fish and Terrestrial Wildlife Reviews Alternate Years***

"Wildlife" technically includes aquatic, terrestrial, and other species. Because of the total volume of regulations that exist, DGIF reviews them in two blocks and in alternating years. Fishing, aquatic, and wildlife diversity (addressing wildlife species not hunted, trapped or fished) regulations are reviewed in even-numbered years. Game, hunting, and trapping regulations in odd-numbered years. Additional regulation changes may be made outside of this regular cyclical schedule if deemed necessary by the Board.

## Some Terms Explained

**Staff Recommendations.** Staff recommendations for regulation amendments constitute staff work done by DGIF's professional biologists and managers for the Board. Recommendations are not "proposed regulations," although they may become the basis for proposed regulations. Staff recommendations become public information at such time as they are mailed to the Board, usually two weeks prior to the first Board meeting. At that time, they may be examined in DGIF's central and five regional offices.

**Proposed Regulations.** It is the Board of Game and Inland Fisheries which, after receiving any staff recommendations and hearing public comments, proposes wildlife regulations. New regulations and changes to existing regulations must first be proposed and then published before the Board may adopt final regulations or amendments. Therefore wildlife regulations are amended over a period of two sequential Board meetings.

**Final Regulations.** After proposed regulations have been published, the second of the two sequential Board meetings is held. The Board hears public comments, and then at its discretion may choose to adopt final regulations. Any final regulations which the Board adopts are submitted to the Registrar of Regulations and published in the *Virginia Register*. (Final wildlife regulations once were posted in circuit courthouses, but now are disseminated to the main public library in each locality via the *Virginia Register*.) Final regulations typically become effective 30 days after publication in the *Register*.

**For More Information** call DGIF (804, 367-1000) or write to the DGIF Policy Analyst and Regulatory Coordinator.

## CITIZEN PARTICIPATION *in* WILDLIFE REGULATIONS



### ***Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) Mission Statement***

*To manage Virginia's wildlife and inland fish to maintain optimum populations of all species to serve the needs of the Commonwealth;*

*To provide opportunity for all to enjoy wildlife, inland fish, boating and related outdoor recreation;*

*To promote safety for persons and property in connection with boating, hunting and fishing.*

## **Board of Game and Inland Fisheries Procedures**

Under Board procedures, changes in regulations are made over two sequential Board meetings.

**First Board Meeting.** At the first meeting, DGIF staff usually present recommendations for regulatory amendments (although staff recommendations are not essential; the Board may propose regulations without them). The Board solicits and hears comments from the public. After citizens' comments are heard, the Board proposes regulations or regulation amendments.

**Dissemination of Proposed Regulations.** The regulations or amendments that the Board proposes at the first Board meeting, or summaries, are:

- posted on DGIF's website, address: [www.dgif.state.va.us](http://www.dgif.state.va.us);
- linked to the *Virginia Regulatory Town Hall* website, address: [www.townhall.state.va.us](http://www.townhall.state.va.us);
- published in the *Virginia Register*, available in each locality's main public library;
- mailed to members of the media in DGIF's periodical *Outdoor Report*;
- published in several major newspapers statewide; and
- available for viewing at DGIF offices.

**Second (Final) Board Meeting.** At the second of the two sequential meetings the Board again solicits and hears public comment, after which the adoption of any regulations as final takes place.

**Dissemination of Final Regulations.** Final regulations are published in the *Virginia Register* (see above for availability) and posted on DGIF's website. Summaries of final regulations are mailed to members of the media in the *Outdoor Report* and are published in DGIF's hunting, fishing and boating law and regulation booklets.

## **Opportunities For Participation: In Person At Public Hearings**

Board procedures provide the following opportunities for citizens to participate in person:

**First public hearing.** A public hearing is held at the first Board meeting, after staff presents any recommendations for amendments, and before the Board acts to propose regulatory amendments.

**Second public hearing.** Another public hearing is held at the second of the two sequential Board meetings, before the Board adopts final regulations.

**Supplemental public hearings.** More public hearings, or *public input meetings*, although not mandatory, may be ordered for any proposed regulations at the discretion of the Board. When such meetings are ordered, they occur between the first and the second Board meetings. In recent years the agency has also held more informal public meetings to receive citizens' views on regulations months before the commencement of both regular biennial regulation reviews.

## **Opportunities For Participation: Mailing or Emailing Written Comments**

Citizens have the option of mailing in written comments on regulations and proposed regulatory amendments.

**Ongoing written public comment.** The Department receives and welcomes comments on a continuous basis from members of the public, outside of any specified public comment period. Comments on fish, aquatic, and wildlife diversity regulations should be received by June 1 of even-numbered years, and comments on game and hunting wildlife regulations by January 1 of odd-

numbered years, to be beneficial to DGIF's development of staff recommendations.

**Public comment period for proposed regulations.** A public comment period on any proposed regulatory actions opens at the time the Board proposes such regulation(s) at the first of its two sequential Board meetings. This comment period is an additional provision to the agency's continuous ongoing receipt of citizen comments, and is provided to facilitate the public's involvement in specific proposed regulations.

The public comment period for proposed regulations runs until the second Board meeting. However, in order to ensure the Board has opportunity to consider any comments before taking final action, the written comments need to be received by the Department no later than seven days prior to the second Board meeting.

In order to be taken into consideration, comments submitted regarding proposed regulations: (a) must be in writing; (b) must be accompanied by the name, address and telephone number of the party offering the comments; (c) should state the regulatory action desired; and (d) should state the justification for the desired action. Comments submitted during the public comment period for proposed regulations should be mailed to:

*Policy Analyst and Regulatory Coordinator  
Department of Game and Inland Fisheries  
4010 West Broad Street  
Richmond, Virginia 23230*

**Comments may also be emailed.** Send written comments by email to the attention of the Policy Analyst and Regulatory Coordinator at: [RegComments@DGIF.State.Va.US](mailto:RegComments@DGIF.State.Va.US). To be considered in the regulation review process, emailed comments also must include the writer's name, full street address, and telephone number.